

Of Enclaves and Internet: How Social Media Affects Political Participation in Authoritarian States

Political Science Research Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation

“with Research Distinction in Political Science” in the undergraduate

Colleges of The Ohio State University

by

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May 2013

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In 1962, Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan proclaimed that the emergence of worldwide telecommunications would transform the planet into a 'global village' of sorts, constructing ties among peoples who had never before been able to interact and who perhaps did not know of each other's existence. This was prior to the emergence of the internet—a phenomenon that has drawn even greater praise from optimistic futurists. Some even claim that the internet is ushering in a new cosmopolitan age, which will weaken ties to the nation-state as it forges transnational identities rooted in a common humanity.

While this new age has yet to emerge, many praise the potential power of internet discourse to derail authoritarianism. The arrival of social media (blogging, chat forums, Facebook, twitter, and so on) has raised the possibility that discussion among disparate peoples online can lead to new ideas, a more informed citizenry, and, consequently, greater mass political participation. Many, however, do not share this bleary-eyed cyber-optimism, insisting, instead, that online interactions, like many varieties of human interactions, can be marred by the less-logical and more group-oriented sides of the brain. According to this pessimistic view, the internet threatens to increase group identification, reinforce preexisting ideas, and even enhance the ferocity with which some cling to ignorance—and this is just with respect to western-style liberal democracies (Morozov 2009). The claim here is that the internet is creating, in effect, a "post-fact society": a fact-resistant world, in which everything and its opposite appear "true enough" and how we "feel" about things matters more than the facts.

Bringing authoritarian states into the picture further muddles the situation. Media control in these countries suggests that internet communication should serve only as an extension of official party dialogue. In many cases, however, proponents of cyber-cosmopolitanism and cyber-democracy may still argue that, given at least minimal freedom with respect to free discussion online, the internet will have similar (if not, entirely the same) democratizing effects within authoritarian states. In recent years, this argument has gained some empirical muscle to support it. Twitter's most recent media spotlight took place not in the developed world but in the Middle East and Maghreb, where it was used to foment the Arab Spring revolutions in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, and now Syria. But did Twitter help cause these uprisings or did it simply channel pre-existing passions? Do social media and online interaction help derail dictators or do they provide authoritarian leaders with still more transmission belts for their propaganda? In short, do the effects of social media strengthen or weaken the ideological power of an authoritarian system?

Few people ask this as strongly as the members of the Chinese Communist Party. Since the internet arrived in the Middle Kingdom in the early 90s, the party has been asking itself, as per Deng Xiaoping, just how many proverbial flies they will have to swat with their digital fresh air. To prevent the possibility that the internet could weaken its rule, the party has enacted one of the most extensive systems of internet surveillance in the world (Yang 2003). But like its uncouth hybrid of 'market socialism', its internet censorship policy is not the airtight monolith that one would expect. Despite the extreme chilling effect that the internet police have in online discourse in China, the Chinese still possess a robust and active online discussion life. By the end of 2008, the total number of internet users in China reached 298 million, at an annual growth rate of 41.9 percent (Li 2009). In addition, there were 117.6 million mobile phone netizens connected to broadband networks around the country. And this population is young and growing; about two-thirds of netizens were between the ages of 10 and 29 (Li 2009).

While entertainment, shopping, and work are all functions of the internet, a robust online discussion life still exists in China, and it consists of exactly the types of communities that cyber-optimists point to in their research. Approximately 80 million blogs exist in China today, and while many of them have no political nature whatsoever, they still create an online civil society that has allowed such discussion to appear spontaneously in the past (Wang 2012). A good deal of politically sensitive material, as long as it isn't too inflammatory, actually tends to go uncensored, contrary to popular western images of China (Christensen 2011). This phenomenon exists for a number of reasons. In part, it is due both to the inability and unwillingness of the party to censor opinions that, in reality, are just more radical extensions of their own ideas. On the other hand, it is also due to the fact that Chinese netizens continuously find ways to trump their own 'Great Firewall', constructing slang and digital backdoors that allow an underground discussion scene to flourish in the PRC (Wang 2012). And finally, and perhaps most importantly, it is due to the fact that Chinese censors tend to attack calls for action rather than the very pervasive criticisms of the government that exist online, allowing a discussion culture to grow and thrive (King et. Al 2012). Due to the vast number of internet users emerging, the authoritarian nature of the government, and the importance of nationalism to modern day China, it seems that the People's Republic is, then, a perfect fit to test these media theories in the shadow of authoritarianism.

This paper, simply put then, will examine the question of how social media affects public opinion and political participation in the context of contemporary Chinese media politics. I will make the case that China is, in fact, a good test candidate for the two, and then will proceed to show how the development of an online civil society through the PRC's stunted version of social media has affected both Chinese public opinion and Chinese political participation through its particular version of information exchange. To do this, I will examine a number of primary instances of 'public opinion in action', or instances of political participation among the populace that are meant to convey large scale

public opinion to the elites, and which arose spontaneously through participation in an online civil society. These instances include the anti-Japanese Senkaku Islands protests (both in 2005 and 2012), the 2008 foreign boycotts during the Beijing Olympics, and reactions to the coverage of the Tibet protests in the Western world. In the end, after examining the evidence, I will argue for the conclusion that, given the abounding evidence for a degree of Enclave Extremism, the Chinese blogosphere acts, in many ways, as an informal ideological censor in itself.

I) Elaborating on the Media Theories

There are two theories on how social media affects public opinion that we will be examining here, both aforementioned; the theory that online interactions can decrease group identification, produce new ideas outside the party line, and lead to democratization, and the idea that the internet can be a breeding ground for misinformation that reinforces pre-existing ideas and group identification.

The first camp is that of the 'Google Doctrine' theories, so-called due to their emphasis on the importance of open search and discussion in fostering democracy (Morozov 2009). These theories encompass theories of internet democracy, cosmopolitanism, and liberalization, and state, obviously, that the internet acts as a catalyst to help society achieve all of the above. While none of these theories claim that the internet actually 'causes' any of these things, what they all share in common is the belief that, by creating an area where people can take discussion into their own hands, online social media provides a forum to create new ideas, which people can then 'shop' between, gaining new insight and producing political activity and change. Such media theories fall under the umbrella of the 'marketplace of ideas' theory, which submits that an open market of ideas is the best way to maintain an informed citizenry. (Downing 2004)

Theories of internet cosmopolitanism are, in a sense, the first theories of the internet's effects on political information exchange and participation, due to their longstanding, tacit acceptance as fact in

some sectors public discourse. As far back as 2000, when social media was hardly even a thing yet, Bill Clinton was comparing internet censorship to 'nailing Jello to a wall', and his statements were echoed by politicians and pundits alike (Morozov 2009).

On the academic side, this class of theories has tended to get backing from those who were advocates of the marketplace of ideas theories in the traditional media playing field. The theories differ in how this process will actually occur, however, with some espousing a slower evolution than others. Rebecca MacKinnon, former CNN correspondent and China pundit, though not, strictly speaking, an advocate of these theories, has explained and, at times, espoused a slower theory which links the development of Chinese internet cosmopolitanism to the slow development of civil society (MacKinnon 2007). According to her, and to those that share her camp, online discourse does not produce political dissent directly, but instead creates a somewhat more informed citizenry which is accustomed to sharing and debating information, especially related to politics. Over time, therefore, this generation will push the envelope more and more, and will finally react when there comes an incident where this privilege they have been used to all their lives is denied. She couples this observation with the fact that the World Internet Project currently estimates that the internet has a "significantly much stronger effect" on China than it does on other countries, and that, as the number of internet users in China increases exponentially, this power will only deepen (MacKinnon 2007). This observation is taken from the elasticity that Chinese civil society has displayed in adapting to internet technology. According to Columbia University professor Guobin Yang, Chinese civil society, due to its incipient nature, is more adaptive to technological change, and therefore will rely more heavily on the internet when it comes to things such as civil society discussions. Due to this fact, he suggests, the internet will become more strongly engrained in Chinese society as a tool of discussion, creating a culture of discussion, he suggests, that is difficult to shut down when push comes to shove (Yang 2009).

Another side of the Google Doctrine theories relates the potential power of the Chinese internet to what happened with former Soviet Republics during what were termed the 'color revolutions'. Theories of this type often compare the Chinese internet to new communications technologies, such as radio, taking root under the Soviet Union, and state that the same effect may happen with China. As defined by Evgeny Morozov in his book "The Net Delusion", this class of theories states that the internet is a tool for democracy simply because, due to the virtue of its communication being so difficult to nail down, regardless of whatever censorship an authoritarian state places on it, if people have some access to the internet, they will necessarily produce new ideas and, most frequently, that those ideas will resemble liberal, western ideals (Morozov 2009). Because the internet allows for the discussion and production of new ideas, the 'Google Doctrine' states, it will necessarily produce ideas that are different from those of the ruling party, and that this, in itself, will upset the ideological balance. The title of the 'Google Doctrine' is meant to reflect the importance of open search and exchange of information that the internet carries with it, and for the rest of the paper I will refer to the cyber-optimist theories as playing a part in this 'Google Doctrine'. From the minute that the internet comes into play, these theories state, people, as they have the ability to take discussion and learning into their own hands, crafting new ideas that are different from those espoused by the official party line due to a newfound freedom of association that wasn't there before. Therefore, this creates a threat to the ruling party, and helps engender the creation of democracy (Morozov 2009).

As well, whereas civil society gatherings and activities are easily banned in the physical realm in authoritarian systems, internet activities are not as easy to control. While censorship is still common on many chat boards in China, experienced Chinese netizens understand how to either bypass the censored areas, or how to communicate in code with each other so as to avoid being caught. In this way, information transfer continues despite the active efforts to suppress it (Wang 2012).

Google Doctrine theories look for contrary viewpoints to what is expressed by the primary or 'mainstream' source of information, such as the government, or for the spontaneous emergence of activism or protest online. Though in authoritarian states, it is admitted that these things may be smaller or more covert in nature. These things, to cyber optimists, suggest an emerging civil society that is able to organize itself both intellectually and physically in a realm independent of government intervention. This, therefore, is what we will look for in observing the processes of Google Doctrine style theories at work.

The second theory, obviously, states that social media has the tendency to do quite the opposite. This class of theories is best anchored by the work of former Obama administration official Cass Sunstein. Sunstein's theory, which I will refer to as the theory of 'Enclave Extremism', due to its popular coinage as such in his article "The Polarization of Extremes", is useful here because it takes a middle of the road representation of many theories that already predict that the internet engenders groupthink in both the private and the political sphere. It is, in reality, a combination of theories, including those that suggest that internet anonymity is the problem, theories that suggest that we filter out conflicting information on the internet, and theories that suggest that the internet is a breeding ground for rumors. The Enclaves theory is chosen here to represent the 'darker' side of the two theories due to its centered position in the spectrum of this side of the debate, or in other words, it tends to lie closest to the consensus of what proponents of groupthink internet theories tend to advocate (Sunstein 2007).

The results of the theory are simple, and are, in fact, what we are testing for. It is the idea that, due to social media's tendency to place people together who have like minded beliefs, people will become more insulated in an online atmosphere where they can pick and choose who they listen to than if they were exposed to differing opinions on the headlines of a newspaper (hence Sunstein's contrasting 'headlines' theory of media diversity) (Sunstein 2007). This leads, of course, to further group

identification, and prevents people in authoritarian regimes from generating too many new or threatening ideas due to the fact that they will still tend to gravitate towards what they already know or, in other words, whatever ideological line the ruling party has been pushing.

The logic behind the argument, however, is not so simple, and is based on modern sociological research related to how people form and maintain opinions. The theory draws from pre-established media research on how public opinion is developed, and extrapolates to the forum of the World Wide Web. The primary base research behind the Enclaves theory comes from established communications theories of information cascades and group polarization. Though two separate theories, they work together to produce the base of the Enclaves theory. Both of these theories rely on confirmation bias, the relatively simple idea that people are more likely to accept something if it resonates with what they already believe to be true.

The theory of Information Cascades speaks about how rumors are started, and how information is changed from something generally harmless into something generally harmful, much like in a game of telephone. It begins with a proposition, which is then transmitted to another person. Whether or not this proposition is accepted has to do with whether or not the person in question has a confirmation bias towards or against the proposition. If they are amenable to it, it will be passed onto another person in a slightly changed form. In the end, it will have grown and gained a life of its own, accepted as truth throughout the community of people who propagated the rumor's existence (Sunstein 2009).

Due to confirmation bias, the rumor is picked up, and then circulated widely until it is seen as having 'credence'. The theory of group polarization describes what happens when a group of people who hold similar confirmation biases get together in the absence of dissenting opinions and discuss the opinions wherein their biases reside, and specifically in this case, the rumor. The theory states that, while they may have only held uncertain opinions on certain subjects before, by discussing these

subjects together, not only do these people become more certain that their opinions are correct, but they become more radicalized in their views, moving further down the spectrum in whatever direction they tended to tilt towards in the first place (Sunstein 2009).

This was demonstrated at a social psychology experiment in Colorado that Sunstein references in his book 'On Rumors'. In this experiment, 60 Americans were taken and sorted into groups of 5 or 6 each. The people, unbeknownst to them, were taken from specifically liberal or conservative counties throughout the state. Though the guests believed there to be a diversity of opinions represented, in reality, the subjects had been placed together based on predisposition to specific political beliefs. They were then divided into groups that were asked to discuss, among other things, 1) Should the US sign an international climate treaty to combat climate change 2) Should affirmative action remain an institution, and 3) Should states allow gays and lesbians to marry or receive civil unions. Before the talk, each person was asked these questions, and most responses, measured on a 1-10 scale of how intensely the subjects felt about the propositions, qualified as moderate. After being given a mere fifteen minutes to discuss the positions amongst themselves, each person in each group had moved markedly towards the pole to which their beliefs, and the beliefs of those in their group, were already inclined. It seemed, then, that discussion in ideologically homogenous populations acted as a reinforcing agent of ideas, rather than a breeding ground for new ones (Sunstein 2009).

These all come together to form the Enclaves of Extremism theory. It's application in authoritarian states is the idea that, due to the limited discourse that is allowed and that is taking place online, even if people are presented with new information online, they will reject that information in favor of information that tends to fit with that they already know (IE, the party line), so long as other participants act to help reinforce their biases. Also, because online forums tend to be places where discussion is limited to take place only among groups of people who already somewhat agree with the

party line (as the others are ostensibly either censored, or else are dissuaded from posting on the forum due to the chilling effect that the threat of censorship entails), the internet will tend to act as an insulator rather than an agent of opening up, re-cementing peoples' initial group identifications. This, in turn, is said to douse what cyber-optimists refer to as the 'democratizing power of the internet'; because people tend to gravitate towards what they already know, and because what they already know is what is produced in private rooms in the party's propaganda department, the internet will become a place where these propaganda pieces, while initially doubted, actually gain *more* validity amongst the people due to the discussion process on the internet.

II) A Note on Theory Applicability and Chinese Censorship

One common criticism leveled at studies of the internet in China, or in authoritarian countries in general, is that normal theories should not necessarily apply, as this simply attempts to attach a western paradigm to countries where the internet is, the critics assert, little more than yet another outlet for the relaying of central party ideas. Like the technology of Orwell's 1984, they assert, the internet in these countries is merely a tool to further integrate propaganda into the home. However, the Chinese internet is much freer than many western observers initially expected it to be.

To begin with, tough internet controls do exist in the PRC. It has been well documented that China has a very thorough system of internet surveillance, comprised of firewalls and weed out programs on one side that prevent access to or the production of sensitive materials, and the internet police on the other, who are in charge of both finding and stopping people who are considered 'politically disruptive', and posting comments favorable to the party's stance, so as to maintain a feeling that the Party's viewpoint is the most popular one. As well, Chinese internet users are driven to self-censorship through a 'chilling effect' brought on by ubiquitous images of the internet police's mascots,

JinJin and Chacha, a cartoon pair plastered around internet chatboards to remind users that they are being watched (King et. Al 2012).

Despite this control, however, it is still clear that discussion exists independent of the Party's control. In a 2012 study by a number of Harvard political scientists, it was revealed that the censorship habits of the party differ slightly than what was initially imagined. It was revealed that, while some extremely politically sensitive materials were removed on a regular basis by moderators (such as information pertaining to the Tiananmen Square protests), criticisms of the government were, for the vast majority of the time, allowed to remain untouched. Instead, what was often cleansed were posts calling for collective action or protests. And even then, the only instances of these being cleansed were if the movements were explicitly pro-democracy or heinously anti-government; most of the time, as long as the collective action called for contained some patriotic sentiment, it was allowed to go untouched (more on that later) (King et. Al 2012).

As well, the reason that China is not only applicable here, but is also perhaps one of the most relevant modern countries to this study, is due to the odd degree of freedom that people have in discussing a certain, limited range of topics within a confined region on the internet, while at the same time possessing the high levels of censorship that necessarily labels it an authoritarian state (King, Pan, Roberts 2012). Christensen elaborates on how, in this day and age where nationalism is the primary party ideology, rather than communism, criticism of the government is allowed to exist as long as it comes from a nationalistic viewpoint. That is, you can tell the government that it is doing something wrong as long as your ultimate goals seem to be patriotic (Christensen 2011). In this way, it possesses the best of both worlds, and represents a square medium for authoritarian internet studies, giving enough freedom for the theories to be applicable, but enough control so that the system qualifies as authoritarian. One can also expect that China's internet strategy will be followed or emulated in the

future by other authoritarian states wishing to take the same approach to a liberal internet, as it, in a world enamored with the idea of an emerging 'Beijing Consensus', will probably serve as a model that others will follow. It possesses the most extensive system of internet surveillance, censorship, and policing in the world, and it is certainly one of the most successful (Bennett 2013).

III) History of Chinese Civil Society

To truly have a good understanding of the importance of the internet in China today, it is important to understand how Chinese civil society has developed in correlation with the development of internet technology over the years. Tracing the development of civil society from the late Qing dynasty, to its sudden truncation under Mao, and rebirth in China's opening up, reveals an incipient civil society that lends itself more strongly to the social effects of online interaction

Civil society will be herein defined using the Jurgen Kocka summation of it as "a space of self-organization in between the state, corporate, and private sectors (Takahashi 2008). Most scholars agree that imperial China, in which the reigning ideology of Confucianism stressed a hierarchical, family-like order leading directly from the nuclear family to the Emperor himself, did not possess a traditional, western-defined civil society. The increasing independence of the merchant class led to the creation, in trade oriented cities such as Hankow (now part of modern Wuhan) led to the creation of trade boards and organizations tasked, in some areas, with the maintenance of civil order. These are alleged to be at least forerunners of the civil society concept (Takahashi 2008).

Most also agree, however, that the development was completely halted under the Maoist regime (Yang 2003). Due to the totalitarian incorporation of all social functions into the state, civil society was, more or less, obliterated as a concept. The only spontaneous demonstrations or organizations came from the Communist affiliated mobs during the Cultural Revolution that would take it upon themselves to carry out the will of the party, often in a rather uncivil manner. Ideology was stifled and carefully

regulated under the communist regime, preventing any sort of civil society from forming (Takahashi 2008).

This changed, however, under the era of Deng Xiaoping. Xiaoping was known for many things, not least among them being the monumental opening up effort that has brought Chinese society into the industrialized world. But with economic openness came a slight degree of social openness, as well. It came with the government initially trying to distribute more power to individual organizations, such as companies, so that they did not have to micromanage emerging civil society. Public gatherings and independent organizations faced a different story, with gatherings being allowed, in theory, but requiring a permit, lest they be labeled 'illegal'. The opening up drive, however, continued to import new technologies, and eventually brought even the internet into the PRC (Yang 2003).

What did continue to develop, however, was a more autonomous corporatist structure that began to distance itself from the party's central control (Takahashi 2008). With the opening up efforts of the economy, the CCP dictated that certain government mandated corporate entities could form their own trade boards and organizations, so long as they maintained the strict boundaries set by the party. While the original intent of this was to outsource the maintenance of order and of the party line to organizations that could more effectively police themselves, so that the top down model could be reinforced by local actors, the effect was to grant corporate entities more authority in an already liberalizing economy.

Aside from this, however, civil society remained fairly nonexistent, especially for the average person, and especially in the politically-related sphere. Therefore, an incipient civil society existed that could, possibly, give way to the effects of increasing societal digitization.

Before speaking about the internet, however, it is necessary to discuss another factor in the creation of Chinese internet civil society; youth nationalism. It is important to note that, once

communism ceased to be China's primary economic model, it ceased to be the primary ideological adhesive for the country, as well (Cao 2005). Whereas beforehand it was the communist revolution that brought the people together, the manifesto was now growth at any cost. Henceforth, the Chinese people were not to look to Marx for inspiration, but to China itself, as it took a path to development based on 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. Hence, the government stepped up the criticisms of China's old enemies and a glorification of the state's imminent rise to power to give the people an ideological fodder to hold onto (Cao 2005). The youth were the primary targets of this new nationalism, as they were both the ones inheriting the growth, and the ones who could be taught in schools that, say, Japanese imperialism is the primary threat to their country's national security.

What this ended up creating, ironically, was a certain, small degree of free speech in China that hadn't existed before. Whereas before, expressing anything even slightly outside the party line would have gotten one arrested, now, as the party line was more blurred, and vague 'nationalism' became the only thing demanded of a citizen, it was up to a citizen to decide to what degree they would be nationalistic. As well, due to the seeming unwillingness of party officials to challenge hawkish news reporters, which some observers link to a desire to maintain a façade of cohesion on foreign policy issues, it has become a relatively safe and common practice for news officials to criticize the government from a nationalistic standpoint. Because the CCP couldn't recant their own ideology by arresting someone who was being a proper nationalist, people found that they could criticize the government. This meant that youth were free to discuss their own opinions of the government as long as their opinions fell within a certain ideological spectrum (Christensen 2011).

A primary example of this phenomenon is the emergence of a class of Chinese youth nationalists known as the Fenqing, literally meaning the 'Angry Young Men'. Originally coined in the late 1970s to refer to leftist Chinese youth who supported reform in the country, and who generally held Maoist

views, it is now used to refer to any youth individual who engages in politics from a nationalistic point of view, especially in the online world (Hughes 2009). Fenqing have become famous, or infamous, in China for their rhetorical attacks on Chinese leaders who are considered too 'soft' on foreign policy issues, and for their attempts to quell any opinions, within or outside of mainland China, that contradict their fervent passion for nationalistic revival. In one particular incident, Fenqing operating within mainland China actually succeeded in stealing and publishing online the personal information of a Chinese girl studying at Duke University. The girl had attempted to mitigate discussion on campus between pro-Tibet independence protestors and local Chinese student expatriates who were staging a counter protest, and this was seen as ideological treason by the Fenqing. They labeled her a traitor, and attempted to smear her image and defame her by releasing her information to the public online, including personal financial statements (Dewan 2008). While the aggressive method of private information publishing has not been pursued in the direction of government officials, the Fenqing have not been quiet online in their criticisms of these officials' positions.

Due to China's desire to modernize and attract both investment and internet entrepreneurship, the blogosphere in China was allowed to develop, though in a stunted version of its foreign counterparts. Many US sites containing sensitive information about things such as the Tiananmen Square Protests were censored, but in some places chat rooms operated with sufficient impunity that people could discuss mostly whatever they wanted to, so long as it wasn't too inflammatory. Chinese social media is generally very fragmented (King et. Al 2012), though a few 'super large' chat forums exist for discussions of an explicitly political nature, among them the "Strong Nation Forum" (Qiangguo Luntan) of the People's Daily that I will heavily explore (Liu 2008). While these were generally heavily monitored and preapproved by the Chinese government, smaller sites tend to be often used by netizens experienced in the art of deception to carry on conversations in code, or used to get around the

firewall, so that they could exchange information the way that one would in a non-censored internet (Wang 2012).

China did everything it could to maintain internet decorum, building what some experts refer to as a 'panopticon' of surveillance. Though most people who posted sensitive content were never arrested, the few that were used as examples to create a chilling effect and prevent further internet deviance. As well, thousands of 'internet police' were hired to not only delete comments about politically sensitive materials, but to post comments supporting the party on the websites (Watts 2005).

What is interesting, however, is the fact that this has done little to deter criticisms of the party online. The Chinese people, having taken the internet over as a replacement for physical civil society, have become seemingly more attached to internet discussion than some western countries have, and the CCP seems hesitant to step on this. As well, most criticisms of the party online seem to fall within that spectrum of 'too patriotic to censor' that was discussed before. Online, however, there are plenty of comments that are not particularly patriotic that will go uncensored (though many still are), due in part to the fact that the Chinese are defensive of their (limited) internet freedom (King et. Al 2012).

Now that we have painted a picture of the functioning of the internet in modern day China, we can begin with the evidence.

IV) Evidence Examined

Due to the pro-nationalist freedom that exists in the media sphere in China today, it would make sense that most of the popular variation in expression and opinion we will find will be contained within thought centered on foreign policy issues. As well, lacking any sort of large scale popular opinion polls with the reliability of, say, an American Gallup organization, or something of that sort, the primary evidence here examined will be things that are, *prima facie*, indicative of mass opinion. Such evidence

will include protests, online movements, and large scale online discussions related to foreign policy, though I have included an example of public opinion concerning censorship, as well. These things will be examined first to make certain that they are truly grassroots movements in themselves, and that they do not seem to emerge from party-sponsored activities. The evidence examined will include the 2005 anti-Japanese protests, the 2008 foreign boycotts, the 2012 Senkaku protests, and the use of a popular internet meme in China to avoid censorship filters. Conclusions are then drawn based on how these instances represent microcosms of the theories at work.

A) 2005 Anti-Japanese Protests

The anti-Japanese protests of 2005 represent some of the largest public demonstrations in China in the past ten years, and their scope and intensity amongst large, political demonstrations by the Chinese people was only recently surpassed by the larger 2012 Senkaku protests which, like the aforementioned protests, were fueled by online activism. The nature of how these protests were constructed reveals how internet discussion actually increased rumors and jingoism among online activists, and these rumors, in turn, fueled the protests to the size that they became. The fervor, which was matched by parallel protests in a number of other countries, including South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines (Liu 2008), brought people out to the streets to protest what were seen as indignities committed by the Japanese.

The protests expressed opposition primarily to Japan's supposed justification of its colonial legacy in a newly released series of history textbooks, and to its bid for permanent membership status into the UN Security Council (Liu 2008). As they gained steam, other issues surfaced, as well, such as oil drilling rights in the East China Sea, the testing of chemical weapons on civilians during WWII, and the ongoing territorial dispute over the Senkaku Islands (more on that later). The protests were not contained to China, and in fact spread, most notably, to the South Korean capital of Seoul, as well as to Taiwan and

the Philippines, though in smaller numbers. The initial government reactions were strongest from China and South Korea, which both issued unilateral condemnations of Japan, and demands that the textbooks be withdrawn from the market, and that Japan not be given a seat on the UN Security Council (Liu 2008).

Though the protests themselves did not originate online, cyberspace was used prominently by activists in many cities to organize further and to debate the nature of the protests, especially where the protests met either resistance or nonchalance by the Chinese authorities, and to organize specific protest related activities, such as boycotts of Japanese goods (Liu 2008). The use of the online realm to promote these interests independent of the government's own initiative, and specifically to promote activities that the CCP either discouraged or suppressed, suggests a change in relationship between the government and the people in the minds of the demonstrators.

The protests initially emerged as a reaction to the release of the new Japanese history textbook by the Japanese Society for Textbook Reform in late March of 2005. The book, known in Japan as Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho (simply 'New History Textbook') was picked up by the Chinese media, who had already covered previous Japanese textbook controversies in 2000, and by internet activists in Hong Kong who had done the same (Liu 2008). The immediate note was outrage; sections of the book began circulating online and were covered extensively in the Chinese news media, which alleged that these sections not only downplayed Japanese atrocities during WWII, but whitewashed them entirely. In particular, a passage relating to the Nanking Massacre was widely circulated, saying:

"At this time, many Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed or wounded by Japanese troops. Documentary evidence has raised doubts about the actual number of victims claimed by the incident. The debate continues even today (JSHTTR 2005)."

This was all that was mentioned of the Nanking Massacre in the book, and the first responders on the Chinese side asserted that this intentionally downplayed the issue to Japanese students. They used

this, in conjunction with things such as high-profile Japanese statesmen's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine (a shrine that honors, among others, a number of war criminals) as evidence that the Japanese had not completely renounced their colonial legacy. Initial protests broke out in Guangzhou, Shanghai and Shenzhen, all three of which used the "Strong Nation" forum (Qiangguo Luntan, or QL for short), an online subsidiary of the People's Daily magazine, to coordinate. Before continuing, it is worth noting that QL is an online message board that embodies the strange limbo of Chinese internet policy in that, though it is in fact an organ of the Chinese Communist Party (in this case, the widely circulated China Daily newspaper), it is renown to have some of the most lenient moderators of any popular forum in China, with the most negative comments getting deleted, but most other things, even things that are blatantly critical of the CCP, remaining untouched (Liu 2008).

Evidence for both the grassroots nature of these protests and for the workings of the Enclaves theory, specifically, at work can be found in the way the protests began (Liu 2008). When CCTV initially picked up the story about the New History Textbook, small protests had already broken out, most notably in Shenzhen, but the news network, for the most part, ignored them in their coverage of the event (Liu 2008). What CCTV did cover was in a mostly matter-of-fact tone, expressing disapproval of the bid, but neither were there calls for outright protest or even a strong condemnation. The lack of news coverage became a topic of dispute on the website, with many participants questioning why the protests were ignored. The majority concluded that the government was ignoring the protests to keep with its message of a 'harmonious society', while ignoring the public. One comment on the forum even went so far as to assert that Xinhua was "intentionally deceiving the Chinese people" (Liu 2008).

In some isolated cases, protestors then went out of their ways to get the attention of the media, with some calling publically for the protests to be covered. (Liu 2008) The government reacted, however, by attempting to quell the protests further, while allowing enough to produce convenient

coverage. In many cases, out of fear of the protests growing too large and unwieldy, the CCP attempted to either downplay the importance of the protests, to cut off public transportation close to the protest site (as opposed to helping certain groups of protestors, as they did in Beijing), to issue official statements urging calm, or all three (Liu 2008). When the People's Daily ran an article entitled "Sustaining Stability Through the Construction of a Harmonious Society" on April 17, however, the reaction was to change the frame of discussion amongst the protestors for the next three days from how to get noticed to what the government was doing wrong

On April 18 and 19, QL was inundated with posts criticizing the government's allegedly lackadaisical treatment of the issue, declaring that the CCP was too immersed in its treatment of a harmonious society to make any serious action. What is interesting to note, however, is the fact that the severity of the reaction changed over time. Initially, posts voiced critical opinion of the CCP's lack of interest, but after a day, a series of posts accusing the government of complicity in the issue became popular, and an ongoing theory that, according to Liu, the government was "orchestrating the message for Japan's UN bid" was occurring. One post noted that the protestors should be wary of,

"Be watchful of the collusion that takes the construction of harmonious society as an excuse but surrenders and betrays the national interest! (Liu 2008)"

Comments that did not reflect this particular theory instead followed a much more frenzied line than they did a few days ago, with posts appearing increasingly comparing Japan's bid to its imperialistic expansion in the years before WWII. One post, in particular, stated that

"Should a 'harmonious' society that is being assaulted and bullied still be called 'harmonious'? Foreign antagonistic forces would never give up their ambition ... they would never allow you to develop yourself peacefully and stably. This is a just self-deceiving slogan fooling ordinary people!" (Liu 2008)

What this led to was a list of grievances, mostly consisting of things that the Chinese protestors considered either uncovered or only partially covered by the Chinese media, that was circulated around the message board. Among these things were an uncovered Japanese congressman's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, a site dedicated to soldiers and commanders who fell in service to Japan in WWII (and, according to Chinese activists, a large number of war criminals), the lack of coverage of the protests in Shenzhen, and the overall tone of the Chinese media towards recent events concerning Japan. To compensate, a large number of comments appeared on the website asking for people to gather in open spaces and protest the atrocities of Japan (Yardley 2005).

In addition, as the attitude had changed to lean towards a feeling that the protestor must be self-sufficient from government help, posters on QL began attempting to organize protests against Japanese goods (which would later serve as a model for the 2008 Japanese boycotts, to be discussed later in the paper). While the campaigns were stifled due to disagreement among the protestors, they are worth noting simply due to the autonomy of the protestors from the organization of the CCP itself, and their use of technology to organize spontaneously (Yardley 2005).

The boycott situation is also of note for the underlying feeling that, ultimately, funding Japanese companies is dangerous due to perceived Japanese militarism. First, it is worth noting that, even though Japan does possess a formidable, modern defense force, its military expenditure, even in 2005, was dwarfed by that of China, and there was no visible buildup of Japanese military might at the time. As well, the Japanese constitution espouses a policy of pacifism, and it is common knowledge that, since WWII, the country has, legally speaking, relinquished the technical right to wage war. This suggests that the threat, in whatever dimension it was states, was perceived, rather than real, suggesting, again, that the primary impetus for the protests was information that was used from CCP propaganda regarding the historic belligerency of Japan.

The attempt to organize a boycott online was, in particular, indicative of Enclaves theory at work. Liu demonstrates that, at the beginning of the boycott discussions (around mid April), opinions amongst the protestors were actually divided into multiple groups. Some saw the boycotts as a short term strategy, others as a longer endeavor. Many stated that the boycotts, if they were even carried out, should be directed only against Japanese companies owned by “radical right wing revisionists” so as not to punish the “virtuous Japanese people (Liu 152). Many even stated that the boycott should be seen as an initial punishment, but should then be followed by gestures to “improve Sino-Japanese friendship”. Many argued that the boycotts simply should not take place at all.

However, the eventual confluence of comments drowned out the initial voices of the moderates, and eventually the majority of the posts were seen as supporting the boycott position. Liu documents, as well, that, upon discussion with the newly arriving participants, many old participants shifted to support the boycott, claiming that it was, in the end, the ‘patriotic’ thing to do (Liu 2008). This seems to suggest a version of events where discussion in a radicalized atmosphere eventually created a consensus.

Overall, therefore, due to the divergence from initial CCP goals and influence, the protests can be seen as truly grassroots movements, rather than top down political implementations, as suggested by some western observers. But does the way that the protests were conceived have anything to say about the aforementioned media theories?

At a first glance, the content of the theories, and the fact that they cast the relationship between the government and people as one of dialogue rather than one of support, seems to support the line of the ‘Google Doctrine’ theories.

However, at a second glance, the discussions in existence on QL seem to be indicative of the processes that are said to contribute to Enclave Extremism. What is interesting here is that, for the most

part, the discussion of activists on the Strong Nation forum tends to lean distinctly to the right foreign-policy wise in relationship to the Chinese Communist Party itself. None of them particularly disagree with the CCP's stance that Japan is a dangerous colonial power that has yet to renounce its history or its aggression, but as they discuss these instances online, they tend to express views as seen above. In the above quote, the phrase 'foreign antagonistic forces' refers here to Japan, and the sentiment expressed seems to be that the situation is much more severe and dire than the Communist Party has predicted, or is acting towards. Instead, it is alleged that the country is actually in more danger than the party initially expressed. Therefore, the protests are, to some extent, a reflection of a conviction that, if things are to get done, the Chinese netizens have to take things into their own hands. This is interesting again because it represents both a criticism and a support of the Party's policies at the same time, and it suggests that a radicalization of opinion has taken place, a la the Colorado Experiment.

So where does this event fit in with the theory? It seemed to follow a pattern of 1) the information was processed and absorbed by internet residents, as presented on CCTV 2) the information was then discussed online, and disagreements were found with certain aspects of the CCP, and then protests were fomented outside of cyberspace. What is interesting is that this phenomenon fits with aspects of both of the aforementioned theories. First of all, it seems to fit the pattern of the enclaves of extremism theory in that, when the policy was discussed online amidst people who, at least nominally, considered themselves to be Chinese nationalists, the initial position (that of the CCP) was taken, and then was further radicalized in the end by the protestors. One could argue, however, that the actions of the protestors also follow the Google Doctrine prediction that a civil society dissatisfied with its current political situation would use the internet to further its political goals, changing the relationship between it and the government. Even if this is the case, however, consensus seemed to be an idea born of the enclave processes, albeit one that the people took into their own hands.

B) 2008-2009 Anti-Foreign Boycotts/Protests

Another instance to consider is the anti foreign boycotts that were organized by Chinese netizens during the Olympics, and specifically those directed towards France, the United States, and Japan. These boycotts are important because, not only do they suggest, in their divergence from the CCP's more level-headed diplomacy, that the protestors implicitly disapprove of their party's handling of events, but they actually represent one of the first times that the Chinese public has spontaneously organized via the internet to take concrete action against a perceived grievance without direction from the party itself (Li 2009). Their origin, due to the similarity of aims and discussion, seems to come from the initial boycott discussions during the aforementioned 2005 protests. And like these protests, the 2008 boycotts began, but where else, on the internet. In the end, they also seem to be driven by hyper-aggrandized rumors, even when most evidence points to the fact that these rumors are false.

The most important boycotts to observe here, due to their size and success, are those against France. While protests directed towards the United States and the UK during the games focused on things such as the preferential treatment of the Dali Lama and the US media coverage of the Chinese, the protests towards the French were unique in that they organized a large business boycott that enlisted government aid (Li 2009). These protests, unlike the others, did not contain overt criticisms of the government, but instead directed the attention of the boycotts entirely outwards.

The protests began when the running of the torch by Paralympics athlete Jin Jing was disrupted in Paris by pro-Tibet protestors. The event was first documented and reported by China Central Television and, like the other events, was then taken into discussion on the internet (Li 2009). The discussion period from the time the torch was disrupted to the actual protests took about 28 days, with the torch being run on April 7 and the first protests appearing in front of French supermarket chain Carrefour around April 28 (Pal 2009). During this time, the process of information cascades and 'enclaves' was

once again demonstrated. In calling for boycotts of French goods, and specifically of Carrefour, a popular (but false) rumor was circulated that the chain had donated large sums of money to the Dalai Lama, according to Minsheng (Li 2009). As well, it was widely circulated on the 'Strong Nation Forum' that the protestors were not actually demonstrators, but people hired by the French government to disrupt the protests. This is crucial because the very locus of the protests themselves were to hit back at French companies that were considered 'anti-Chinese', echoing the sentiment of some 2005 protestors that only the 'virtuous' Japanese should be left alone. Yet, the reason that Carrefour was targeted out of all French companies, aside from its ubiquity in various Chinese cities, was this rumor which, before the boycott discussions on QL, had not existed at all (Pal 2009). Despite the lack of evidence for this assertion, belief was strong enough in it to spark a protest, suggesting that cascading effects were at work. Hence, the activists called for an economic boycott to punish France.

In addition to their boycott against Carrefour, the activists called on people to protest visits to France in the future. In the two months following the torch incident, Chinese visits to France dropped by 70%, according to Herve Ladsous, the French ambassador to Beijing. This was effective enough that the Parisian city government sent correspondence to Beijing, urging the government to quell the unofficial boycott on travel (Li 2009).

Like the 2005 protests, the protests against France seem to offer an awkward amalgamation of the two theories. On one hand, as stated above, a major impetus for the boycotts was the rumor born online through enclaves of Carrefour's complicity with the Dalai Lama. On the other hand, the actions of the protestors show a very marked shift in the way they viewed their relationship with the government. When the picketing began in front of Carrefour chains on April 1, the netizens contacted the Chinese government, urging it to cancel the 21 business contracts (adding up to over \$1 billion) it made with France in 2007, and expected the government to stand behind their protests. While they declined, the

CCP did stand with the boycotts against French travel, firing back to Mr. Ladsous, when he urged them to quell the boycotts, that the Chinese netizens had the right to make their own choices, and that they stood behind them, as France needed to learn that diplomacy was a “two way street” (Li 2009). This suggests that the protestors view, and have their views reinforced by government support, that they have at least some freedom in the way they express their nationalism, and that they can view the government as a tool to support them, rather than themselves as tools to support their government, echoing the civil society change that Google Doctrine theories predict. Ultimately, however, their actions are driven by the rumor produced by online enclave processes, suggesting that between the two theories, this one had a more pronounced effect on their execution.

One of the more conservative instances of protest in China, however, centered on an online campaign designed to increase national morale in the light of what was seen as a series of insults to Chinese national pride by CNN. Beginning in early 2008, a series of anti-Chinese riots broke out in Tibet, many of which called for independence and/or a loosening of government policy towards Tibet. The riots, which spread from Lhasa to the rest of the region, targeted ethnic Han Chinese and their property, and were deemed by onlookers to be very disorganized and violent, rather than concerted and goal oriented (CNN 2008). In its coverage of the event, however, CNN released a number of photographs that Chinese netizens deemed ‘altered’, due to their depictions of the protestors as peaceful and of the Chinese police as brutal (Li 2009). This incited a rage that lead to both protests around the network, and an online ‘national pride’ campaign designed to act as a countermeasure to perceived anti-Chinese sentiments expressed by CNN’s staff. The value of these protests for theory, however, lies mostly in how Chinese social media seems to have created a sort of ‘rally around the flag’ effect, taking statements that were originally released by Communist Party officials and running with them to their logical extremes.

The discovery that CNN had cropped a number of photos related to the protests sparked online discussions where the images, which were alleged to be intentionally doctored to advance an anti-Chinese bias, became symbols of what the netizens felt was an inherent Sinophobia in western media (Li 2009). The discussion began with Chinese nationals in western countries posting images from CNN onto message boards in China, and comparing them with similar ones released on Chinese news channels, such as Xinhua.cn, China's state-run news website. The primary focus was on how the photos seemed to lessen image of the violence of the Tibetan protestors, and to indict the Chinese police in apparent brutality against the peaceful Tibetans. One popular image included a Chinese man raising his arm to defend himself from a blow initiated by a Tibetan protestor. The image was cropped so that twelve other weapon-wielding Tibetans in the background were left out (Li 2009). CNN claimed that this cropping was done so that the image could meet the required frame size for the image, but Chinese netizens alleged that the cropping was meant to lessen the malicious depiction of the Tibetans (CNN 2009). More credibility was given to the netizens' claims when two images surfaced that claimed to depict Tibetan protestors being attacked by the Chinese police. It was demonstrated, however, that in both cases the police were not actually Chinese; the first incident depicted Nepalese police in Kathmandu, a city neighboring Tibet, clashing with protestors, while the second depicted a similar clash with Indian police. These photos were also circulated around, among others, Fox News, The Washington Post, and the BBC (Li 2009).

Adding to the fire, the straw that broke the camel's back came when CNN correspondent Jack Cafferty referred to the Chinese police and government as "goons and thugs" on the Situation Room when discussing China's treatment of the pro-Tibet protestors. The message was relayed to the Chinese public by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, when it released a press statement stating that

“We are shocked by and strongly condemn the malicious attacks on the Chinese people by CNN’s Cafferty. We demand CNN and Cafferty himself take back his vile remarks and apologize to all the Chinese people (Li 2009).”

The ministry depicted the discussion as an insult to all Chinese people, rather than just the people involved in the suppression of the Tibetan protests. This was immediately picked up by the internet protestors and calls for protests and the resignation of Cafferty were made. On April 20, approximately a thousand Chinese protestors (mostly expatriates) gathered outside of CNN’s Hollywood headquarters to protest the photos and comments and to demand the resignation of Cafferty (Li 2009).

More interesting, however, was the reaction. Aside from the physical protests that began outside of CNN, an online campaign began and lasted for weeks, where approximately 5 million Chinese internet users on social networking sites would change their names with an addendum of “<3 China”, meaning ‘heart’ China’. This campaign was meant to demonstrate solidarity amongst the Chinese in the face of what was considered a national insult by western media. To further demonstrate the popular clout that this incident held, a popular rap song was released online entitled ‘Don’t Be Too CNN’. The phrase was meant as a euphemism for ‘don’t be too closed minded’ or ‘don’t be too racist’. The video went viral in China, topping Baidu as one of the most searched terms in a week(Li 2009).

While the protests outside of CNN may have been reflective of Chinese activists taking action into their own hands, the viral video and ‘I <3 China’ campaign symbolize an act of reaffirmation and support of government policy by the people of China, in an act that was fed by information born in echo chambers online. The Chinese online sphere cemented very early on that the photographs were heinously and maliciously cropped. This suggests the working of confirmation bias. As well, the vast majority of the Chinese netizens who changed their online avatars to support the ‘I <3 China’ movement were not initially part of the discussion, or any discussion, on the photo cropping. Instead, their

participation in the event seems to be part of an information cascade in which, due to the perceived support the movement had, they processed the allegations of anti-Chinese bias as true.

In addition, while smaller in nature than the protests against the US/CNN coverage of the Tibetan riots and those against French activism at the Olympic Torch Relay, the protests against a British university's decision to award an honorary doctorate to the Dalai Lama reveal the potency of the Chinese nationalistic echo chamber.

On May 21 of 2008, when China was still dealing with the results of a large and devastating earthquake in Sichuan Province, the London Metropolitan University decided to award the Dalai Lama an honorary doctorate in philosophy, a decision which proved, at least to Chinese netizens, to be of particularly poor timing (Xiang 2008). Discussion began with students going online and condemning the Dalai Lama and expressing hurt at the university's perceived injustice. One commenter even stated that the award was a "Rape of the Chinese people's feelings (Li 2009)." Another stated that the doctorate was tantamount to a declaration of war against the Chinese people (Li 2009). The day after, petitions were circulated online that attempted to 1) get the university to revoke the doctorate that it had granted the Dalai Lama, and 2) to create a large boycott of British Universities unless an apology was made and the action itself was revoked. The latter was created on the basis that China is the largest exporter of students in the world, and that a student boycott would effectively hurt the pockets of British universities seeking foreign student to fill their ranks (Li 2009).

The petition was circulated both online and around a number of government agencies, which agreed to pick up the petitions at the activists' requests. Approximately 2,500 netizens signed the petition, with 95% of those agreeing to the proposed conditions and to the boycott. As well, of the 20 international education consultancies in Beijing, 17 signed onto the petition, stating that they would agree to inhibit students from enrolling in British universities unless the proposed conditions were met.

The petition seemed to be effective. On June 16, the Metropolitan University of London wrote a letter to the Chinese Embassy expressing an apology for having awarded the Dalai Lama the doctorate, and, while it didn't repeal the decision to grant the doctorate, it did promise that it would never happen again (Li 2009).

While the instant itself definitely depicts what could be called a change of characterized relationships between the government and the people, whether or not it fits into the liberal or enclaves theory is another question. There is no question that it represents the growing power of the position of Chinese activism; without any support or urging from the government, these people acted as foreign policy instruments that castigated a foreign university for a diplomatic slight it had made. However, it simultaneously shows a scenario in which netizens organized without any prior prompting using the internet, and yet the actions that they took were markedly conservative. In getting the party on board via the participation of the 17 foreign study institutions, they made it into what could be called an 'official' movement against the London Metropolitan University. Their willingness to participate directly with the government suggests that they see themselves as instruments of the will of the state of China, rather than part of a struggle incited by an independent segment of civil society.

All three 2008 instances instances where hyper-nationalist sentiments created an echo chamber in which confirmation bias seemed to flourish, despite the openness of the internet. Even in things such as photographs, which should be open to different interpretation based on one's ability to see it for him/herself, the pattern of a reinforcement and radicalization of opinions along a conservative line was followed. However, the reactions of the Chinese netizens seemed to suggest that they feel entitled to demand that the government do something different about these grievances than they already are. This suggests that, in some way, civil society may be actually contributing to the enclaves discussion, rather than to the more liberal discussions as predicted in the 'Google Doctrine' theories.

One thing that must be taken into consideration is the technological limitations that exist on the ability of the CCP to censor the works of online activists, as this modifies the theories we are working with; while the 'Enclaves' theory has much more ground to stand on when the vast majority of what internet users will be exposed to is, in fact, one homogenous opinion repeated ad nauseum, only in different guises, if internet users could still find a way to discuss more colorful opinions, even if in muted form, then the prospect for the Google Doctrine could still have some life in it. And this is exactly what the story of the Grass-Mud Horse and its struggle against the River Crab represents.

C) Chinese Internet Memes and Covert Online Protest

In early 2009, Chinese internet forums, including high traffic ones such as the previously discussed 'Strong Nation Forum', began to see seemingly random and impertinent discussions about a struggle between a mythical creature known as a Grass-Mud Horse (pronounced 'Cao-Ni-Ma' 草泥马) and the evil River Crab that was invading its homeland, the MaLe Desert, pop up randomly in discussions that tended to cover relatively serious topics, including those of a political persuasion. As well, the creatures, which resembled alpacas, appeared in internet memes, plushies, and even a popular Baidu (Chinese Google/entertainment aggregator) children's video where the alpaca-like creatures happily sing about their triumph over struggle (chinadigitaltimes 2012). If internet viewers happened to observe that the Chinese characters for the creature happened to look and sound suspiciously like a very vulgar slur against someone's mother, and that the characters for 'River Crab' were the inverted characters for 'Harmonize', they would be correct.

These two phrases, Mud-Grass Horse and River Crab, are examples of euphemisms used by Chinese netizens to protest internet censorship by the CCP. Originally, protest against the deletion of comments, especially popular ones on large chatboards, was conducted in the form of the creation of discussion threads lampooning the 'harmonizing' of the comments under China's newly-inaugurated anti-

pornography laws, which served as a front to help clean up what was considered to be an online environment replete with Xiaoping's legendary intellectual flies. The term 'Harmonized' was an understated jab at then-president Hu Jintao's proposition that such laws were created with the intention of ushering in a more 'Harmonious Society', the slogan for his years in office. Eventually, due to the perceived anti-government sentiments these euphemisms carried, anything including the phrase 'harmonized' was added to the censorship filters on China's websites, preventing such protests from being outwardly conducted (Wang 2012).

To circumvent this, however, the internet community resorted to the production of euphemisms within euphemisms. The characters for 'harmonized' were inverted to create 'river crab', a symbol which has become synonymous with CCP internet censorship. To protest the alleged 'clean, well-intentioned nature' of the pornography laws which lead to the legitimization of increased amounts of censorship, the 'mud-grass horse' was chosen as the opponent of the crab. The horse's name is intentionally close to a vulgar slur against one's mother in order to represent how freedom of expression, even if vulgar, will ultimately triumph over the suppression of free speech (Wang 2012).

The importance of the pure existence of this movement is difficult to overstate. Internet censorship, as it does not fall within the nationalism spectrum of government criticism discussed earlier, is not a topic that is acceptable to discuss online, and due to its recent and especially controversial nature, open discussion of its existence is even more chilled, unless that discussion is in favor of its existence. Chinese banzhou (forum masters) have made very concerted efforts, as well, to conduct a good PR campaign for the existence of the Chinese pornography laws; the Public Security Bureau has even gone so far as to create two cartoon mascots, Jingjing and Chacha, for internet censorship, to take away the 'Orwellian edge' associated with the internet censorship laws (though the existence of the mascots also serves a second function as constant reminders that internet surveillance exists, and that users should be sure to

cancel their own comments) (Yan 2006). Therefore, due to the way that the internet censorship laws were conveyed and discussed by the mainstream media, under the 'Enclaves' theory, the internet pornography laws should not be terribly controversial, or else, if they are, then organized protest against them should not emerge, due to the drowning out effect caused by a combination of the censoring of comments and the inundation of public forums with comments created by the Banzhou.

However, not only does this euphemistic protest exist, but it is actually very widespread and popular. In 2009, it was one of the top 5 searched phrases on Baidu, China's answer to Google. When the famous 'children's video' was first released, it scored 1.4 million hits in its first three months online (Wines 2009). It has become popular enough that it has actually spawned a large series of animal plushies in China meant to resemble the legendary creature, and the sales surrounding the Grass-Mud Horse are estimated to make it a million-dollar industry (Wang 2012). The use of the euphemism has even made it up to the higher echelons of Chinese civil disobedience. In an image which may have contributed to his arrest, famed Chinese artist and dissident Ai Wei Wei posed naked for a photo, in mid jump, covering his genitals with only a Grass-Mud Horse plushie. The picture, entitled "Mud Horse Central Stop" (草泥马挡中央), can be interpreted as a vulgar slur towards the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee (Sheridan 2011). Though censorship has emerged with greater strength against the use of the Grass-Mud horse as a symbol of free expression, its popularity has been so enduring that, instead of switching to another symbol or euphemism, netizens have found other ways of constructing images or phrases representing the Grass-Mud Horse in forums, including drawing its silhouette with words on chat forums. In a 2009 iteration, the horse was depicted as a silhouette encased in smoke, used by some to celebrate the burning of the new CCTV building in Beijing (Wang 2012).

Therefore, what one can conclude from this is that the 'Enclaves Theory', while it may be quite active in some respects, especially in regards to shaping citizens' opinions and actions on foreign policy

issues, is not air-tight. Discourse that is contrary to the primary CCP line in a non-nationalism subject has found a way to exist despite censorship, and even in a forum where most of the outward, allowed discourse centers around pro-CCP ideologies in relation to pornography laws, the dominant voice in the discourse seems to be that of dissent towards the draconian mechanisms of Chinese internet surveillance. This suggests that the internet, according to the 'Google Doctrine' related theories, does remain a tableau where, even under censorship, dissenting opinions can coalesce and play out.

It is worth noting, however, that the dissenting opinions are limited to whether or not the *ability* to dissent should exist or not, rather than specific foreign policy or governmental issues that have gained traction amongst dissidents. While the concept of internet surveillance is very easy to turn into a meme and lampoon via videos and coded language, more complex ideas, such as foreign policy and economics, may not fare so well in such an environment. And these are the areas in which the CCP still seems to have a monopoly on discourse, and where 'Enclaves' related group polarization seems to be the strongest, as demonstrated by the large scale public reactions against Japan and against countries that have been perceived to slight China. As well, this caveat does not necessarily punch a large hole in the 'Enclaves' theory, as its very existence may in fact be explained by the underlying assumptions behind 'Enclaves'.

The definition of 'meme' itself, according to its original use by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, is "an idea, behavior, or style that spreads rapidly from person to person within a culture." In his book, "The Selfish Gene", Dawkins asserts that the process of meme generation is exponential, passing from person to person much like a virus would, and that its strength is based on whether or not a majority choose to pick it up and, due to its exponential growth, transmit it to the rest of the population (Dawkins 2008). Indeed, the primary transmission mechanism for knowledge of the Grass-Mud Horse was not an organized, concerted effort for people to defy the CCP's internet regulations, but

rather by means of funny images, videos and other things that were passed around much like popular jokes on the internet are passed around in American online culture. This theory of meme generation is very similar to the 'Enclaves' theory in that it asserts that transmission and popularization are based on a reinforcing of majority opinion, and that, therefore, Grass-Mud Horse could actually be an instance of 'Enclaves' causality rather than of 'Google Doctrine' causality. Even so, however, this still leaves the caveat of the fact that the CCP's voice, however prominent it is in legacy media, has been drowned out by a process which, theoretically, should have reinforced it a thousand times over. For this reason, Grass-Mud Horse seems to be an instance of 'Enclaves' actually *reinforcing* 'Google Doctrine' rather than opposing it.

D) 2012 Senkaku Islands Protests

The Senkaku Islands protests of 2012 are some of the largest public protest actions taken by the Chinese public in the last twenty years, and they seem to support aspects of both theories because, despite supporting a party line that has been pushed for years, they contained an important aspect of spontaneity and were, in a roundabout way, critical of the party. The protests followed a very close pattern to the protests of 2005. The most interesting thing here is that, unlike the formerly discussed protests, the CCP had a much stronger hand in forming these demonstrations, as the initial complaint about the actions of the party and the Japanese were actually premiered on CCTV, rather than on the internet itself, and attempted to guide the protests in many instances (BBC 2012). As if to purposefully demonstrate its ability to be independent, however, the Chinese blogosphere took this incentive and ran, forming protests which were ultimately, perhaps, even more critical of the CCP than their 2005 counterparts. What is interesting to note, and this demonstrates exactly how beyond the CCP's original intentions and control the protests got, is the lengths to which some of the protestors went. One group, which organized itself online, actually got a flotilla and attempted to land on the Senkaku islands to

plant a Chinese flag, before they were intercepted by the Japanese coast guard. Yet another group of protestors smashed cars and businesses owned or made by the Japanese (Martina, Jones 2012).

As a bit of background, the Senkaku Islands are a group of uninhabited islands possessed by Japan, but claimed by China, due to the historic maritime boundaries of the Qing Empire. After the treaty of San Francisco was signed to end the Pacific Theater of WWII, China used the clause about Japan returning 'all occupied territories to their rightful owners' to claim the Senkaku (which they refer to as the Diaoyu islands). It is quite possible that they desire the islands due to their fossil fuel resources and their very desirable location in the middle of major trade routes (Shaw 1999). The Chinese government has frequently used this dispute to rally public opinion against Japan, a country that is already demonized due to its actions in WWII. This is most likely to draw attention away from domestic disputes. Hence, the Japanese have often become a scapegoat/a channel for the energies of the Chinese nationalists (Shaw 1999).

The relevance of these most recent protests to our question is based on both their size, and on how they got their start. After the Tokyo metropolitan government agreed to purchase the islands (which were privately held by wealthy Japanese individuals) the dispute between the Chinese and Japanese ambassadors was made public on China Central Television, where the position of the government against the annexation of the islands was made (BBC 2012). Almost immediately afterwards, a swarm of discussion appeared on various Chinese microblogs, as well as larger ones such as Strengthening the Nation forum, calling for people to come to the streets and join in street protests. The message went viral, and August 19 became the preferred date for the protests (BBC 2012, Aug 16). It is interesting to note that many of the posts criticized the CCP's handling of the Senkaku Islands situation, and called for more action to be taken against Japan, urging people to come out due to a perceived public duty to make their opinion known (BBC 2012, Aug 17). A number of posts were then

made expressing the need to meet up and protest the annexation of the Senkaku by the Japanese. The turnout to these protests was immense, highlighting just the amount of enmity held by the Chinese people against the Japanese.

The 2012 protests proceeded slightly differently than their 2005 counterparts because, whereas the government lagged behind in both coverage and criticism during the 2005 spouts, it actually took the lead in actively criticizing the Japanese actions regarding the islands in 2012, and in many ways tried to guide and control the protests. The incident was initially publicized when a Taiwanese coast guard ship was caught off the coast of the Senkaku by the Japanese coast guard, who asserted that the aforementioned ship was attempting to police the islands under its own control scheme, effectively suggesting their incorporation into Taiwanese territory on a public level. Days later, a small fishing boat filled with Hong Kong nationals landed on the Senkaku carrying a PRC flag, and attempted to jump off the boat and swim to the Senkaku, before getting caught by the Japanese coast guard (BBC 2012). This was also publicized by Xinhua, which released a press statement covering the “valiant efforts of the Chinese nationalists” and condemning the Japanese efforts much more strongly than they had before. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Liu Weimin actually echoed a common online phrase from the 2005 Senkaku protests when he proclaimed that “No one will ever be permitted to buy and sell China's sacred territory (BBC 2012).”

As well, it is important to note the government intervention attempts that were observed during the protests. Guangzhou blogger Guen Yuanchow noted that he protested with a group of approximately 500-600 farmers that had ridden on a bus from Hebei province, a poor area where the citizens would not have been able to afford the sophisticated transportation or internet connection necessary to spontaneously organize in the way the protests demanded (Demick, Makinen 2012). He also noted that a number of protest ‘leaders’ –people with megaphones seen leading crowds- were later

identified by netizens as policemen out of uniform. Ai Weiwei himself commented that “much of these protests are staged”, including, allegedly, many of the posts calling for protest (Demick, Makinen 2012).

On the other hand, this supposed ‘astroturfed’ aspect of the protests is called into question by the internet-born diversity of many of the protest goals, and of the inability of the authorities to contain what eventually became mob-like riots. In many places, the protests took on a much more anti-CCP tone than their counterparts in 2005. Though the internet discussion was much more prolonged and varied in the 2005 protests, due in part to a perceived media complacency about Japanese actions in the UN, the street protests this time saw a common theme of discontent with what was viewed as the government’s ‘soft’ attitude towards foreign policy issues. In Shenzhen, in particular, netizens organized a campaign of carrying posters of Mao Zedong and other paraphernalia of his reign, many of them accompanied by his own popular slogans on foreign policy. The Mao signs were meant to signify the protesters’ support for a leader perceived to be much more assertive and responsible on issues of foreign policy than the current regime, as he is classically billed in Chinese history classes as a hero who managed to quash foreign influence in the state and to assert Chinese socialism on a global scale. Accompanying these signs frequently were images of the ousted communist leader, Bo Xilai, as well, who is often used as a mouthpiece for anti-capitalist criticisms of the state in modern day China. Among other protests that appeared were protests for increased food safety measures by the state, calls to reduce corruption levels in the politburo, protests against income inequality, and protests against environmental degradation, which were particularly common in Beijing (Tang 2012).

Eventually, the protests came to a point where the police had to intervene, as in cities such as Beijing, they evolved into mass vandalism of anything Japanese, and Japanese-brand cars were especially targeted. What is interesting is how long these protests lasted despite being recognized by the police that were standing guard to monitor the protests. Occasionally, according to Liu, protestors

would be asked to leave or to take their signs down, but for the most part activists, including those wielding signs about controversial issues such as corruption, the environment, and even Bo Xilai, were allowed to continue on, so long as they grouped themselves with other nationalistic Chinese protestors. It appears, then, that even in moments of intense protests, the government will allow them as long as they maintain the nationalistic angle that was talked about previously. In fact, records show that many soldiers even kept flags during the protests which they passed out, mostly to protestors complaining about the more controversial subjects. This suggests that the aim of the CCP may have actually been to help direct the protests towards a more nationalistic perspective, perhaps even reinforcing the aforementioned 'Enclaves' sedimentation of nationalistic sentiments.

On the other hand, activities like car smashing were eventually forcibly put down when the protestors did not honor the pleas of the party to demonstrate against Japan peacefully. This suggests that, though there are elements of the protests which agree with the party's positions, it is the degree of severity which the party has a problem with, and which has emerged as a problem (Martina, Jones 2012).

What this suggests is interesting because, whereas the other physical protest examples trended more closely to the enclaves theory, the 2012 Senkaku protests have a very strong element of Google Doctrine material in them. It is true that the basis for the protests is the particular breed of jingoism that seems to nest and breed online; the fervor of the protests screamed against the annexation of 'sacred Chinese territory' in the event of the Japanese government purchasing a piece of land it already technically owned. However, especially in the Shenzhen incident, many cities used these protests as direct methods of speaking out against the government, even as the government was attempting to organize the protests to its benefit. This suggests that, while online discussion certainly acted to spruce up ideological fodder for the protests, it ultimately did not elicit as strong of conformity as the Enclaves

theory might predict. Instead, as per those cyber-optimists that state that the emergence of a civil society will change the relationship between the government and the people, the netizens used the protests to make a political statement. This suggests that, while strongly at work, there are limitations of the Enclaves theory, and hitherto unrecognized strengths in the Google Doctrine theories.

V) Conclusion

After reviewing the evidence, the answer to the question of how social media reflects political opinion and participation falls somewhere in between the two theories. In conclusion, it seems that, between the two theories, Enclave Extremism is most represented in the workings of Chinese internet discussion, but only up to a certain extent. As predicted in instances where people already had predispositions towards certain beliefs, such as in the 2005 protests against Japan and in the activism against Carrefour in 2008, misinformation was not only easy to spread online, but it was accepted as fact by enough people to kick off large scale protests and online movements. In instances such as online censorship, however, where reality conflicted enough with the 'official opinion', enclave extremism was not able to gain a foothold and, as evinced by online movements to protest against internet censorship, the opposite effect can take place. This suggests that opinions, while they certainly can be influenced by a perceived internet intellectual majority, must have at least some strength to be influenced by the processes described in the Enclaves theory. When reality conflicts too much with these processes, even if they are backed by official opinion and an artificial majority, they gain no traction.

While the Enclaves theory is certainly at play, however, certain aspects of the 'Google Doctrine' theories do show up in the way that the netizen activists approach their relationship with the Chinese government. The willingness of activists, in cases such as the protests against London Metropolitan University, to petition the government to change its behavior seems to come from a belief that the activists have a responsibility to care for the welfare of Chinese society when they perceive that the

government isn't doing enough. This seems to emerge from internet discussion that lends a critical ear to the workings of the government (even if that ear comes loaded with misinformation), following the prediction of the Google Doctrine theories that suggest that the internet helps foster a somewhat democratizing, nascent civil society. This does not suggest, however, that the GD theories as a whole are valid; it simply means that one tenant seems to hold true, and that this tenant is still developed in the sorts of enclaves predicted by Sunstein and friends.

At the moment all we can conclude, however, is that the construction of Chinese internet discourse seems to favor a flow of misinformation and radicalization. The eagerly debated question of whether or not it is a democratizing force remains to be seen. Based on the scale of protest movements born out of internet-charged public opinion, it would seem that the CCP does, indeed, need to contend with a public that is more reactive to political matters than it was before. But that does not mean that, under the right conditions, this process cannot reinforce loyalty to the state, or that the government cannot attempt to guide public opinion with a full understanding of these processes (a la its attempts during the 2012 Senkaku Islands protests). If an informed guess as to the necessary conditions for democratization in China is to be taken, the Enclaves theory that has here been validated suggests that, to break the monopoly of the official opinion on democratic discourse, reality must contrast sufficiently with the argument that the CCP's hegemony is a superior method of government to a democracy. What that would mean for Chinese society, however, is another matter entirely.

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